

TACTICS.

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A NEW
PRINCIPLE
OF
TACTICS

PRACTISED BY
THE ARMIES

OF THE
REPUBLIC OF FRANCE;

ILLUSTRATED AND RECOMMENDED TO BE PRACTISED

BY THE
REGULAR AND MILITIA ARMIES

OF THE
UNITED STATES,

BY JAMES SIMONS

BRIGADE INSPECTOR.

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George Washington, Esqr.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

S I R,

NEVER have I forgotten; never can I but with gratitude remember, the many illustrious and effectual services you have rendered to your country, both in war and in peace. Still fresh is it within my recollection, the period, when in opposition to the unjust claims of Great-Britain; in defence of a persecuted and oppressed people; to curb the ambition and pride of a nation whose favour was only to be obtained by unconditional submission, and to obtain for your beloved country *Liberty and Independence*, you drew your sword, headed her armies, made the science of war your study, fought and conquered!—Nor have your efforts been less effectual in the preservation of peace, so essential to the happiness and prosperity of America. Mingling therefore, past recollections with the period which will soon arrive, of your returning once more to the enjoyments of private life, all grateful hearts, by an involuntary consent of sympathy, part with you with the purest gratitude and reluctance:—Blessed be thy hours in retirement, as they have been magnanimous in public!—I owe to you, sir, more than the common gratitude due to you from a countryman. Accept therefore, my most cordial acknowledgments, for the honour and benefit you have conferred on me, by your confidence in nominating me to an honourable and confidential civil appointment.

I offer therefore as a testimony of my affection this small publication: to your patronage and inspection I recommend it for the common benefit of our country. May Heaven avert the necessity of America ever being obliged to use it, even in her defence. Yet unfortunately for mankind, the manifestation of the purest regard for virtue, humanity and justice, does not at all times prove a sufficient shield against oppression: for however repugnant even upon the most proper and humane principles it may be to a nation
to engage

EVOLUTIONS.

ON the beating of the preparative by the signal drum, the troops will prepare to form the close column by divisions, by the right, the right in front, and will march with the quick step, waiting for the signal of march from the signal drum: the drums of the whole line answering the signals and the marches, beat on the signal drum.

The commanding officers of corps are particularly required to make their drummers attend critically to this regulation.

The close column thus formed, will display to the left.

The troops will then prepare to perform a manœuvre, new, and perhaps unknown, in America, and which it is necessary to illustrate. It is a tactic superior in its principle, simplicity and effect, to any thing ever known or practised by the greatest masters of the science, even including the great king of Prussia, FREDERICK II. and his powerful rival in this science, the great GERMAN, who appears by his principles of the march in line to the front, to have had a glimpse only of this wonderful and extraordinary manœuvre. The principle of this evolution is not only not contemplated in STEINHAUSEN's tactics, (who was most justly esteemed a profound master of the science, and whose name should always be remembered with gratitude by Americans) but it goes to the destruction of his, and all the other masters' fundamental principles. This great discovery seems to have been reserved for the particular era of the French revolution; but it is with the most sensible regret the INVENTOR has it not in his power to mention the name of the great author of this manœuvre, as his name is not specified in the book from which this manœuvre is taken.

The tactic is called changing the front *by the line of sight*, which is done by marching on direct lines; and although at first view, the thing appears impossible, it is nevertheless not only geometrically demonstrative, but it is more natural, more simple, and more effectual, and better adapted for utility, than any manœuvre ever invented. It is infinitely more easy and natural than wheeling, inasmuch as in all whelings it is required, that the men shall look one way, and at the same time go another—and they can no otherwile preserve the line in wheeling than by inclining the contrary way to which they look: whereas, in this new manœuvre, the men have only to look and march straight forward. It is certainly therefore obvious to common sense, that this new movement is more natural and simple; but its great superiority, is in its being

being more effectual. It combines with the great Chevalier de Folard's principle of the column, all the advantages of the line, and is infinitely superior to the Count TURPIN's improvement on the Chevalier's system; or even the oblique order of the great FREDERICK of Prussia. It was a principle among the greatest generals, to avoid performing the *Quart de Conversion*, or indeed any other *manœuvre* in the presence of an enemy: whereas this manœuvre may be performed, in column or in line, in full charge, with this immense advantage, of appearing to attack in one point, but suddenly, like an arrow from a bow, piercing your adversary in the contrary direction expected, beginning a slaughter with the commencing manœuvre, to the astonishment of the vanquished.

NEW PRINCIPLE OF TACTICS.

“TO change the front of Troops either from left to right, or from right to left, is the first object of Tactics, or the art of military evolutions. According to the present system, this change is performed by wheeling a quarter of the circle, in large or in small divisions. (see fig. 1)

1st. In so doing you march your troops on a circular line; but nature has destined us to march on a straight line. This circular movement, is then, contrary to nature. Now, whatever is contrary to nature, is equally contrary to good sense, and the true principles of science. Whence it happens, that after many years experience, the best disciplined troops, never perform these evolutions correctly: for we never can do well, what is contrary to common sense.—We must add, 2^{dy}. that natural instinct which inclines us to march on a straight line, opposes all the effort we make to march on a circular line. The troops will always depart from it by a centrifugal motion, so that the quarter wheel which you propose to make, is nothing more than an elliptical line, or the prolongation of a curve line which you intended to reduce to a quarter of a circle. (see fig. 2d)

The evenness and unevenness of the ground, the celerity or slowness of the movement, will cause this elliptical line to be more or less prolonged. From thence happens two inconveniences: 1st. we march over more ground than is necessary, and consequently give a great advantage to the enemy; 2^d. after having made this wheel, the troops find themselves so dispersed, that they are compelled to close the line either on right or left; but this waving motion is not without great danger in the presence of a skillful enemy.

3. This

3. This circular march compels you to offer a flank to the enemy, which is very dangerous.

4. The circular march destroys your equilibrium: now he who loses his equilibrium, loses at the same time his strength. Whence necessarily results, that the enemy will obtain the victory, if he attacks you in the moment of performing your evolution. After these general observations, which I have made, it now remains for me to examine the rules by which it is proposed to make this quarter wheel. The masters in the art of tactics say, that the quarter wheel should be executed in the same manner that a door turns on its hinges. Now it is difficult to imagine two things which less resemble each other, than a door made of a matter inanimate and solid, which hangs on its hinges, and an arrangement of men of whom each has a distinct and particular movement. It is not then astonishing, that we fall into many absurdities in the vain attempt to make men move like a door on its hinges. It is to be observed—

1st. That this imitation of a door turning on its hinges can never be performed without a mathematical exactness on the part of the file leaders to quicken or slacken their march according to their distance or nearness of the centre of wheeling. It is a great defect in tactics, to require from soldiers to make such a calculation.

2d. We are also compelled to diminish greatly the strength of this movement, and to destroy, totally, the equality of it, since those on the flanks must march with more celerity than those near the centre, on which the wheel is made. Now this is acting contrary to the true principles of tactics, which require equality and rapidity of movement: for it is only in the regularity and harmony of movement, that consist the force and thunder of war.

3d. According to this manner of wheeling, the flank files and those near the centre of wheeling, can never arrive at the same instant on the line of wheeling, so that each soldier arrives at his destination in the slowest manner instead of performing it in the quickest manner possible: for every change is dangerous.

4th. By the same reason we arrive very slowly at a situation to act; instead of being always able to act.

5th. This manner of wheeling up a point which is in itself a movement, must be very difficult: for we cannot fix ourselves on an object which is not fixed in itself. It now remains for us to examine the different modes of changing the front by quarter wheeling in detail. There are three ways—The first is performed by platoon: that is to say, each platoon makes a quarter wheel to the right or left, and to the line; then marches in by the oblique step.

On this

On this manœuvre it is sufficient to remark; 1st. that the line is broke which is always very dangerous; 2d. That a flank is offered to the enemy; 3d. We march obliquely a slow movement, untidy, and as contrary to the natural march of man as the circular line.

The second manner consists in breaking the line by platoons, by half quarter wheel. On this manœuvre it is sufficient to remark, 1st. That the line is broken; 2d. That we turn our backs to the line on which we wish to range ourselves, which causes us to extend more than is necessary, and consequently gives a great advantage to the enemy. Besides, there is a double operation to be performed: for we must first break the line by half quarter wheeling it, and then place ourselves in line by half quarter wheelings.

The third manner of changing the front is performed by quarter wheeling by files—consequently we fall into all the inconveniences of the march on a circular line. This operation is also tedious: for instead of following the cord, we wind on the arc.

Now if such are the difficulties, dangers, and unskillfulness of this quarter wheeling when it is performed to the front; how much more difficult and dangerous when it is done to the rear, especially when pressed by the enemy?

In short, the present system of Tactics must be viewed as a dreadful tyranny which suppresses the ardour and locks up the strength of soldiers, and which, making use of great precautions and means infinitely multiplied, can only produce facility and vicious effects.

Let us now seek a system of tactics, which, *without* of *hermen*, permits each individual the exercise of all his faculties, and all his strength, and which can produce by means simple and easy the great effects of a prodigious energy;—what are the true principles of tactics; what the means of performing every evolution with intelligence, with facility, with strength, with quickness. They are reduced to the five following rules:

1st. To make troops act to the natural march of men, that is to say, on a straight line.

2d. To perform every evolution on a fixed point.

3d. To give to each individual his particular route.

4th. To require no calculations from a soldier, but so to act that every evolution is performed agreeably to the march of nature: that is to say, from absolute necessity.

5th. To reduce every evolution to the least possible space: that is to say, in every evolution whatever we never exceed the square of the line. When we shall have united all these advantages, then we shall have found

the true

rises on the line in the rear, finds himself instantly in condition to strike, head against the enemy dispersed in the pursuit, either to fire on them or to attack them with bayonet or pike. In short, I maintain, that with the aid of this principle, the nation will quickly learn every evolution, and to perform them better than the best disciplined troops in Europe: that is to say, every evolution will be performed in half the time, and with double the force, as we have already shewn. Further, we can perform evolutions which cannot be done by the present tactics—such for example as the wedge, pincer, rhomb, &c. which are very useful evolutions, especially for a nation which uses pikes; and consequently accumulate a great force on a narrow front."

This manœuvre when used in close column, either advancing or retreating, like a two-edged sword, cuts on either edge: for as soon as a column pierces the adversary's line, the head of the column which has passed through may instantly face inwards, when the 1st and 2d ranks of the flanks of the column may instantly change their front by the Line of Science, and charge the enemy in rear or retiring. So likewise, can the flanks of the remainder of the column, immediately form the line by changing their front by the Line of Science, whereby the enemy may be pierced in front and rear at the same time; still preserving in the rear and front of the enemy a column to act as occasion may require.

On the preparative from the signal drum the battalions will make a half-facing to the right (except the 1st file and the file leader of the second file of each battalion to the right, who face to the right.) On the beating of a march, the file leader to the right will step to the right, so as to cover his rear file who stands fixed. In the same instant all move, and each marching always in a right line, will inevitably fill the place which he ought to occupy. This will be repeated until the troops re-occupy their original ground.

On a preparative, the troops will prepare to form the close column by platoons, by battalions on the 5th platoon, the right in front, and will march on the signal of a march from the signal drum.

Instantly as the columns are formed by battalions, the 1st and 2d ranks of the flanks of the columns will change their front to the right and left by the line of Science: that is to say, the right flanks of columns will change their front to the right, and the left flanks of columns will change their front to the left. Immediately as a line is thus formed by the flanks of the columns, each line of each battalion will fire two rounds only. As soon as this is done the troops will face inwards and will join their respective

respective columns by the line of science in the same manner in retreat to the columns, as they changed their front from the columns.

On a preparative and march from the signal drum the columns will display, and instantly as each column is displayed it will fire two rounds.

The troops will then charge bayonets; and charge with the quick step one hundred yards in line, with the drums beating the long roll, the trumpets and bugles sounding the charge, and the whole line shouting. The troops will halt and fire two rounds more.

The troops will then form the open column by platoons; by the Line of Science, and march in a Charlevoix.

The cavalry and artillery will form the same evolutions directed for the infantry, and upon the new principles of tactics as recommended; to effect which, the artillery will find themselves much aided by the principles expressed by the great GUZMANT, in his essay on the tactics of artillery, vol. I. chap. IV. page 33, plate XII; and the cavalry by the principles of the same author in his analogy between the manœuvres of cavalry and those of infantry, vol. I. Chap. VI. page 28, plate XI.

It is related by the great BONAPARTE, in his late actions, that a part of his army being surrounded, and himself in a desperate situation, he instantly formed his 5th and 3rd demi-brigades into a close column, (here he resorted to the Chevalier de FOULARD's system) and whilst they advanced to pierce through the enemy, the latter opened their files for the purpose of surrounding them. This manœuvre of theirs gave him an assurance of victory. The evolution of the line of science forming from the flanks of his column is the best adapted for the purpose of BONAPARTE, of any that ever was invented, and was no doubt the one he used.

When we contemplate the perfection to which the king of Prussia, FREDERICK II. brought the old principle of tactics; the effect of the new principle of tactics appears almost impossible, though equally true as astonishing. It is asserted, that the charging of the front of a line can be done in half the time required by the old. We will judge therefore of the excellence of the new principle, by the following recital of what was done by the old: A line of twenty Prussian battalions, extending near 4000 yards in front, advance in order of battle 1200 paces without the smallest derangement. The same line execute a conversion on its centre to form obliquely to its former front in ten minutes. A column of twenty squadrons, each 90 yards in front, display in 53 seconds. There are examples still worthy of imitation; but when executed agreeably to the new principle of tactics, it seems to leave a conviction on the mind that further improvement in this science is impracticable. Let us then speculate and understand well what is now made known.

JAMES SIMONS.



fig. 1.

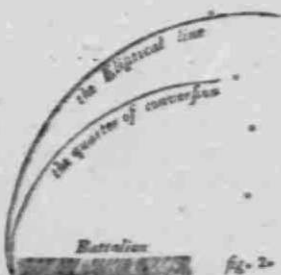


fig. 2.

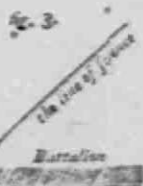


fig. 3.



fig. 4.

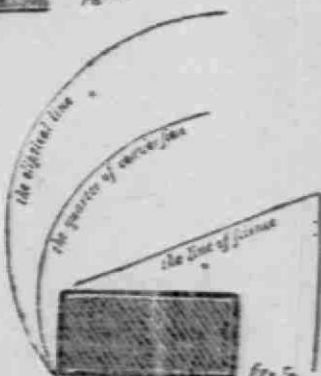


fig. 5.

PHALANX



fig. 6.

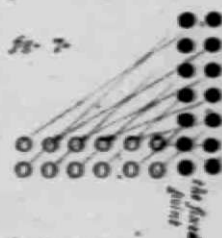


fig. 7.

the first point to change
the front on the left
in retreating

fig. 8.

the first point to change
the front on the right
in retreating

MASON FRIT.